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## Officer Career Development: URL Officers in Joint-Duty Assignments

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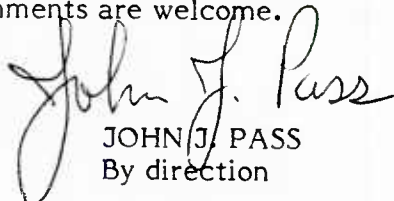
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1. This effort was conducted within program element 6223N (Mission Support Technology), project RM33M20 (Manpower and Personnel Technology), task RM33M20.06 (Career and Occupational Design). The purpose of the work unit is to develop a prototype model of URL officer career decisions that can be used to assess the impact of present and proposed URL career policy and practices upon those decisions and the officers career activities.

2. Enclosure (1) is the seventh in a series resulting from this work unit. Previous reports described: the factors that influence the early career development of surface warfare officers (SWOs) (TR 82-59), background and initial sea tour factors that predict SWO continuance beyond obligated service (TR 83-6), SWO career experiences and concerns (TN 83-11), aviation detailer decision making in the antisubmarine warfare patrol community (TR 84-31), career development problems of three unrestricted line officer communities (under review), and the reactions in 1982 of three URL officer communities to their detailers (TN 87-40).

3. Appreciation is expressed to CAPT H. Gehman (formerly OP-130J) and CDR W. Schmidt (OP-130E40) for their support and assistance in the design of the project.

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Officer Career Development: URL Officers in  
Joint-Duty Assignments

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## SUMMARY

### Problem

The Defense Department Reorganization Act of 1986 placed strong emphasis on significant experience in joint-duty assignments. With the Navy's current career requirements focused on sea duty and the Navy's Washington tours, additional requirements become very difficult to include in career plans.

### Objective

The objective of this study is to provide information that can be used in the formulation of the Navy's joint-duty career policy by comparing the characteristics of joint-duty shore, Navy shore, and Navy sea duty billets. The billet descriptions were provided by the incumbent URL officer's perceptions of such billets prior to the passing of the Act.

### Approach

The Personnel Distribution and Career Development work unit data bank of 6,680 officers yielded 105 aviators and 51 surface warfare officers that were in joint-duty command tours in FY86. The 156 officers' perceptions of their billets, commands, and the Navy's desire to retain them on active duty and their FITREPs were compared with matched samples of officers in Navy shore and Navy sea duty billets.

### Results

Billet incumbents perceived Navy sea duty as much more intrinsically rewarding than the incumbents of Navy or joint-duty shore duty. The same relationship was present in their perceptions of the Navy's desire for them to continue on active duty. Aviators perceived Navy shore duty as more intrinsically rewarding than joint-duty shore duty; Navy sea duty as much less extrinsically attractive than either types of shore duty; and joint-duty tour subordinates as less favorable than those in other tours. There were no significant differences in the FITREPs among any tours or officer communities.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Senior aviation and surface warfare officers place a very strong emphasis on the professional development aspects of Navy sea duty assignments. Since officers in such assignments also perceive themselves as more desired by the Navy to continue their careers, it appears that Navy sea tours are highly valued and appear to be perceived as significant indicators of the officer's potential for future promotion. Since both Navy and joint-duty shore tours are considered less attractive than sea duty, new career policy should trade Navy shore tours for joint-duty shore tours rather than Navy sea tours for joint-duty shore tours. The present low assessments of joint-duty shore tours--and future evaluations of Navy career policy--will probably drop further if the new policy does not include significant assignments, adequate tour lengths and the opportunity to complete such assignments.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Problem

In the Defense Department Reorganization Act of 1986, Congress placed strong emphasis on officers obtaining significant experience in joint-duty assignments (i.e., those assignments associated with the coordination of activity among two or more military services). While the impact of the act on the Air Force and the Army cadres of officers would appear to be limited, it is major for Navy officers. Traditionally, the Navy has focused on operational experience at sea as the key factor and Navy headquarters experience in Washington as the secondary consideration when selecting line officers to achieve flag rank. This emphasis leaves little opportunity for highly promotable officers to be assigned to joint-duty billets, suggesting that a change in policy is essential. Otherwise, it will not be possible to meet Congress' requirements in regards to these assignments without significantly reducing the emphasis on warfare experience that has been so successful over the Navy's long history.

### Objective

To assist the Navy policy makers in the development of an optimal joint-duty assignment policy, an assessment was undertaken of the perceptions of line officers about joint-duty commands and billets and the quality of the officers assigned to such duty prior to passage of the 1986 Act. The results should aid not only in developing policy that is optimally acceptable to the officers but also in designing the best strategy for implementing the new policy.

### Background

Between July and October 1986, survey data were collected from 7,842 unrestricted line officers from the aviation, general unrestricted line, and surface warfare communities in the grades of O-1 through O-6. These data were part of an exploratory development project, Personnel Distribution and Career Development (PDCD) (Morrison & Cook, 1985). The purpose of the project is to provide a prototype model of influences on officers' career decisions that could be used as an aid for Navy officer policy makers and personnel managers. The survey data can be merged with the officer master file (OMF) and are supported by extensive interviews. These data were available to aid in achieving the objective.

## APPROACH

To achieve the objective, a comparison was made among three groups of Navy officers of their perceptions of their current assignments (command and billet) and of the Navy's desire for them to continue their careers. One group was currently (1986) in joint-duty assignments and the others were in either a Navy shore or sea assignment. The latter two groups were also selected from the officers who had never had joint-duty assignments. General unrestricted line officers were withdrawn from the population because they are not eligible for operational sea tours, a key facet of the investigation.

### Sample

A PDCD subsample data file of 3,805 aviation and 2,875 surface warfare officers (SWOs) was searched to find all that were in one of the 177 commands (UIC) that the



Navy previously considered to be joint-duty assignments. Of the joint-duty officers, only one was in a sea position so that individual group was omitted. One hundred and five aviation and 51 SWOs were identified as joint-duty shore assignment officers (Table 1). The remaining file of 6,523 officers was reduced by removing the officers who had served in a joint-duty UIC prior to 1986. The file was reduced further by deleting officers with additional qualification designation in the OMF personnel record that indicated joint-duty experience (joint operation planning system or joint, combined, allied or office of the secretary of defense staff officer). From the remainder, those without present or prior joint-duty experience, four random samples were selected, stratified to match the number of officers in the grades and communities represented in the joint-duty, shore assignment groups. One hundred and five aviators assigned to Navy shore duty and one hundred and five assigned to Navy sea duty were chosen. Fifty-one SWOs assigned to Navy shore duty and a similar number assigned to Navy sea duty were also selected (Table 1).

**Table 1**

**Sample**

Assignment	N by Community		Total
	Aviation	SWO	
Joint-duty	105	51	156
Navy shore	105	51	156
Navy sea	105	51	156
Total	315	153	468

All of the officers were male and 62 percent were grade O-5. The remainder were nearly evenly split between O-4 (16%) and O-6 (14%) with a few O-3s present.

### Variables

In the survey instrument referred to above, the officers used a seven point scale to evaluate 12 aspects of their present jobs and related duties. They were also asked to evaluate five aspects of their present tour on a five point scale from highly unfavorable to highly favorable. To simplify the reporting of the results, these 17 aspects of the job and tour were clustered into scales (Table 2) that had been developed as part of the PDCD project. The major one, intrinsic, was composed of the officers' evaluations of their jobs' challenge, use of skills and abilities, interesting duties, adventure, sense of accomplishment, opportunity to grow professionally, and doing something important. These seven intrinsic outcomes are internal to the officers and are given by them to themselves. Such outcomes appear to satisfy the officers' needs for competence and self actualization (Porter, Lawler, & Hackman, 1975, p. 45). The second significant factor, extrinsic, comprised evaluations of the separation from family/friends, hours of work required, work pressure, and ability to plan and schedule activities associated with their jobs. These four extrinsic outcomes are external to the officers and have a concrete reality. Such outcomes appear to satisfy the officer's needs for security, esteem/reputation, and autonomy (Porter et al., 1975).

**Table 2**  
**Aspects of Jobs and Commands**

---

Intrinsic

Challenge  
Use of skills and abilities  
Interesting duties  
Adventure  
Sense of accomplishment  
Opportunity to grow professionally  
Doing something important

Extrinsic

Separation from family/friends  
Hours of work required  
Work pressure  
Ability to plan and schedule activities

Social System

Superiors  
Immediate subordinates  
Readyroom/wardroom/peers

---

Another type of variable analyzed was the officers' perception of whether the Navy wanted him to continue his career as an active duty Navy officer; a seven point scale from definitely not to definitely does was used. The final variable was a quality index that had been computed using information that the officers provided from their last few evaluations (FITREPs) (Holzbach, 1979; Morrison, Martinez, & Townsend, 1984).

Analyses

Pair-wise comparisons of group means for both scale scores and individual items were conducted using t tests. Since unequal cell sizes and heterogeneity of variance were present, analysis of variance could not be used.

**RESULTS**

When the intrinsic aspects of the work are considered, SWOs evaluate Navy sea duty higher than the other assignment types (joint-duty:  $t = 5.8$ ,  $p = .00$ ; Navy shore:  $t = 4.2$ ,  $p = .00$ ) indicating that there is no difference between joint-duty and Navy shore billets ( $t = 1.5$ , n.s.). Aviators also assess Navy sea duty as better than Navy shore duty ( $t = -2.3$ ,  $p = .02$ ) but feel that Navy shore duty is better than joint-service shore duty ( $t = -2.6$ ,  $p = .01$ ) (see Table 3). Both SWOs and aviators see Navy sea billets as more intrinsically rewarding than either type of shore jobs. The key intrinsically rewarding aspects of sea duty appear to be "adventure," "challenge," and "opportunity to grow"; they are rated the highest of the seven intrinsic job characteristics for both groups of officers. SWOs rate

all intrinsic aspects of sea duty higher than the same ones for either joint or Navy shore duty.

**Table 3**  
**Intrinsic Aspects of Work**

Assignment	Community Mean <sup>a</sup>	
	Aviation <sup>b</sup>	SWO
Joint-duty	4.8	4.5
Navy shore	5.3	5.0
Navy sea	5.8	6.1 <sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Mean score across seven items; there are no differences between aviators and surface officers in the same type of assignments.

<sup>b</sup>Each mean score is significantly higher ( $p \leq .01$ ) than the one above it.

<sup>c</sup>Significantly higher ( $p = .00$ ) than the mean scores for the other two types of SWO assignments.

The evaluations of the extrinsic aspects of their shore assignments show similar the same patterns and levels of evaluation for both officer communities (see Table 4). While SWOs rate the extrinsic characteristics of sea duty nearly the same as Navy shore duty ( $t = 1.5$ , n.s.) and only slightly worse than joint-duty ( $t = 2.2$ ,  $p = .03$ ) aviators rate Navy sea duty significantly lower than both types of shore duty ( $p = .00$ ). "Separation from family/friends" appears to be the key sea duty factor that is rated as especially unfavorable by the aviators; however, both "hours of work required" and the "ability to plan and schedule activities" were also negatively rated characteristics of sea duty for the flyers.

There are minimal differences between the two communities when they rate the social system of the various commands across the three types of assignments (see Table 5). However, aviators assess their joint-duty command social system lower than either type of Navy command (shore:  $t = 2.2$ ,  $p = .03$ ; sea:  $t = 1.9$ ,  $p = .05$ ). This effect seems to be due primarily to differences between the subordinates that work for the aviators in the joint-duty tours compared to those working for them on Navy shore and sea billets.

Both the aviators and SWOs in shore assignments feel that the Navy is expressing a significantly lower desire to have them stay in the service than the impression that the Navy gave them if they were in a Navy sea assignment (see Table 6). There are no significant differences between the two communities across the three types of assignments.

**Table 4**  
**Extrinsic Aspects of Work**

Assignment	Community Mean <sup>a</sup>	
	Aviation	SWO <sup>b</sup>
Joint-duty	5.0	5.2
Navy shore	5.3	5.0
Navy sea	4.0 <sup>c</sup>	4.6

<sup>a</sup>Mean score across four items.

<sup>b</sup>Navy sea duty significantly lower than joint-duty but minimal differences among the remaining contrasts.

<sup>c</sup>Significantly lower than aviators perceive other types of assignments ( $p = .00$ ) or surface officers perceive sea duty ( $p < .91$ ).

**Table 5**  
**Social System Aspects of Work**

Assignment	Community Mean <sup>a</sup>	
	Aviation	SWO
Joint-duty	4.2 <sup>b</sup>	4.2
Navy shore	4.4	4.3
Navy sea	4.4 <sup>c</sup>	4.3

<sup>a</sup>Mean score across three items.

<sup>b</sup>Significantly less than Navy shore ( $p = .03$ ) and sea ( $p = .05$ ) duty for aviators.

Table 6

Do you feel that the Navy wants you to  
continue your career as an active  
duty naval officer?

Assignment	Community Mean <sup>a</sup>	
	Aviation	SWO
Joint-duty	4.3	3.8
Navy shore	4.8	4.3
Navy sea	5.4 <sup>b</sup>	5.8 <sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Mean score for the single item.

<sup>b</sup>Significantly greater than either Navy shore ( $t = 2.3$ ,  $p = .02$ ) or joint-duty ( $t = -4.3$ ,  $p = .00$ ) aviation assignments.

<sup>c</sup>Significantly greater than either Navy shore ( $t = 4.1$ ,  $p = .00$ ) or joint-duty ( $t = 5.9$ ,  $p = .00$ ) SWO assignments.

About 60 percent of the officers within each community reported sufficient information from their last few FITREPs for a quality index to be constructed for them. Since the formulae are different for the two communities, the indices were standardized within communities to provide a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. No significant differences were found between any pair of means shown in Table 7, indicating that the same quality of officers had been assigned to each type of assignment. It should be noted that the Navy's FITREPs have been becoming increasingly skewed toward the higher ratings since the index was constructed in 1982 and the officers represented in the sample are quite senior. Therefore, the quality index results may be questionable.

Table 7

FITREP Index<sup>a</sup>

Assignment	Community Mean	
	Aviation	SWO
Joint-duty	-.08	-.25
Navy shore	-.05	.08
Navy sea	.11	.18

<sup>a</sup>Standardized within communities: mean = 0.0; standard deviation = 1.0.



## DISCUSSION

It is clear that when relatively senior SWOs rate their present assignments, those in shore assignments, including joint-duty, do not see their jobs as intrinsically desirable as SWOs see their sea assignments. The shore jobs are rated especially lower on "the opportunity to grow professionally," "adventure," and "a sense of accomplishment." It would appear that SWOs perceive sea duty as the key to the intrinsic aspects of a Navy career and any shore duty is perceived as much less important. Aviators evaluate sea duty nearly as highly as the SWOs but they consider Navy shore duty as more important than joint-duty in the "use of skills and abilities," as an "opportunity to grow," and in promoting a greater "sense of accomplishment." While aviators agree with SWOs about the importance of sea duty, they do not denigrate Navy shore duty as markedly.

Aviators especially find that sea duty includes more "family/friend separation," "less chance to plan," and "longer hours," than either of their types of shore assignments or than SWOs assess their sea duty. These may be the factors that detract from Navy sea duty and makes Navy shore duty more attractive than it appears to be for SWOs. The lower perception that aviators have of the quality of their subordinates may be influencing them to evaluate joint-duty tours as less attractive intrinsically than Navy shore duty. Poorer quality subordinates may thwart their opportunity to achieve and grow professionally. However, the quality of their subordinates does not appear to be an overriding factor in either impression of whether the Navy wants them to continue their careers or not.

Because of the Navy's traditional emphasis on sea duty, it appears that officers assigned to sea duty perceive that the Navy wants them to continue their careers more than those assigned to shore billets even though the FITREP results are similar for each group. Because senior officers' FITREPs are so highly skewed to the high end of the scale, the FITREPs may not be very good indicators of the officers opportunity for future promotion. Therefore, assignment to a sea duty billet, the billet most closely associated with the Navy's purpose, may be perceived by the officers as the Navy's signal to them that they are doing important things and still have promotion potential and the opportunity to continue a Navy career.

## CONCLUSION

The Navy's traditional emphasis on "going to sea" is the probable cause of the very strong perceptions by aviation and surface warfare officers about what is good and bad about their assignments AND what the Navy has signaled to them is important for them to do in their careers. Senior officers in both the aviation and surface communities assess sea duty as being very important to their motivation as a Navy officer. This appears to emanate from the perception that assignment to senior sea duty billets is a key indicant that the Navy wants the officer to continue his career and probably implies to the officer that he is a strong contender for future promotion. If the new joint-duty policy jeopardizes the opportunity for significant senior officer sea duty, that policy may not be readily accepted. Joint-duty shore tours should replace Navy shore tours for high quality officers but not Navy sea tours.

In addition, joint-duty has not been a significant factor in the upward mobility of Navy officers in the pas so the current major effort to publicize the fact that joint-duty will be critical to promotion in the future should be continued. A key move will be consistently assigning high quality officers to important joint-duty tours and allowing

them to complete such assignments. If the best officers are assigned to short-term, perfunctory joint-duty billets or given credit for questionable joint-tours, joint-duty jobs will become a form of "ticket-punching." While Navy officers presently perceive that their careers are influenced by too many required billets (ticket punching), an increase in such an emphasis may lead the best officers to lose respect for the Navy's officer career policies in spite of the fact that Congress mandated the joint-duty assignment requirements.

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